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ABSTRACT

This journal issue addresses itself to the humanism versus back to basics controversy in education by focusing on its relationship to reading skills. The eight articles explore the following issues: (1) the importance of reading skills as a foundation for any type of curriculum: (2) the necessity of some balance between teaching basic skills and the humanistic application of those skills: (3) the inhibiting effect of prescribed reading programs on children's creativity and spontaneous desire to learn: (4) approaches to teaching comprehension of literature beyond the usual decoding skills: (5) the significance of the reader's subjectivity in responding to teaching methods: (6) the actual extent to which the population of the United States is illiterate: (7) the role of "reality therapy" with students for whom basic skills approaches are not suited: and (8) the intrinsic polarity between humanism and competency in educational strategies. (HTH)

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EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

Humanism And The Basics

JOHN E. COWEN

During a time when both teaching practices and teacher efficiency are under attack by the community and segments of our educational family, it is indeed timely that *THE READING INSTRUCTION JOURNAL* should address itself to the theme, "Humanism and the Basics."

Some of our most severe critics are chanting a resounding phrase, echoed loud and clear by the media, that we should ". . .return to the basics." Illustratively, Frank F. Armbruster's feature article published in the *New York Times Magazine* (August 29, 1977), entitled, "How Schools Fail Our Children," states: "It is true that, in many ways, this means returning to a system we had 20 years and three-quarters of a trillion tax dollars ago. This is certainly a bitter pill for us to swallow, but with the welfare of a generation of youngsters at stake, we may have no other choice."

As rhetorical and vacuous a position as this may seem to more informed professionals, it is a position that is, to our dismay, finding exuberant support amongst critics of individualized and humanistic education. In an effort to combat the rising cost of education and to curtail higher taxes, critics are attributing the highly publicized state and national assessment findings, i. e., low scores in basic reading and mathematics, to ineffectual "progressive" teaching practices. If the cost of education is not the critics' primary complaint, these attacks are based on conjecture and half-truths, which can only further obfuscate the difficult process of combating the serious problem of reading deficiency.

"Humanism and the Basics," therefore, is an attempt to dispel such irrational fears, and to place into perspective the current reading situation.

RIJ is most grateful to the authors who responded most enthusiastically to its invitation to contribute to this special thematic issue. Roma Gans' reply to the editor is characteristic of this notable group's expressed concern regarding the back-to-basics movement: "I am honored to be asked to write for an issue of such importance. For years, I have challenged the concept of "basic" as applied to reading. So I am eager to contribute."

Basic Skills: Focus On Reading

DOROTHY S. STRICKLAND

Emerging Trends in Basic Skills *(Reading)* Instruction

The clamor for a return to the basics represents a genuine felt need among the population of the United States. Yet, this effort would seem to fly in the face of a growing body of evidence revealing a positive trend in reading achievement in the United States.

At the federal level, the National Assessment of Educational Progress is one important measure of general educational achievement in the nation's schools. Contrary to popular belief, this series of tests which was designed to measure general trends in achievement, showed that the reading ability of nine year olds had increased significantly and that the reading ability of 13 and 17 year olds had shown no decline during the four year period from 1971-1975. Most important, it appears that we are improving the reading of our less advantaged children.

At the state level, more states should be encouraged to complete studies of reading achievement similar to that conducted for the state of Indiana by Leo Fay and Roger Farr, *(Then and Now Reading Achievement in Indiana (1944-45 and 1976),* School of Education, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1978).

The Indiana study compared the reading achievement of Indiana school children in 1944 and 1976 and found that today's students generally read as well, if not better than their counterparts of three decades ago. The study is unusual because it used the same test to make comparisons of students whose schooling was separated by so many years.

All this does not imply that we do not need to invest our energies into helping our children read better. The literacy demands of today are far greater than they were thirty years ago. At the turn of the century, nearly two-thirds of the labor force was unskilled. For those workers virtually no education was required or expected. Today, even the most basic jobs require some degree of literacy. Modern technology has provided us with complex equipment, accompanied by technical manuals that must be understood if the farmer, mechanic, or truck driver is to be successful in his or her work. Individuals in our society are penalized economically and socially if they cannot cope with the increasing amount of paperwork necessary to handle ordinary day to day activities. Today's students are required to remain in school until they are sixteen. Yesterday's students either produced, left school, or they were forced to leave.

The American public is demanding literacy for all its children. It is important to keep in mind that this is a relatively recent goal, one that will require a national effort to educate large, diverse populations to the extent that once was reserved for a limited few.

Basic Skills and Competency Testing

No discussion of emerging trends in basic skills instruction can adequately be pursued without consideration for the impact of competency testing. The two seem always to go hand-in-hand. The return to the basics is generally

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regarded as a means to extract greater accountability from the public schools. The push to require schools to account for pupil progress through competency tests was a natural outgrowth of what appeared to be a very logical and clear cut solution to solving the "educational ills" of the United States.

As of March 15, 1978, 33 states had taken steps to mandate the establishment of minimum competency standards for elementary and secondary pupils. The remaining states are presently involved in some form of study or legislative action related to minimum competency testing. Unlike the earlier period between 1975 and 1977, the current move toward minimum competency testing is a slow, thoughtful process.

Unfortunately, in many states, minimum competency testing has created at least as many problems as it was intended to cure. There are no easy answers to questions concerning what to measure and how and when to measure it. Questions related to setting minimum standards and devising plans for some type of follow-up actions are even more perplexing.

The competency testing, which so often accompanies an emphasis on basic skills instruction, presents another, more serious problem than those already raised. This problem relates to the idea that minimum basic skills tests are limited to include just that—the most fundamental skills believed to be required to function in our society.

The items included on these tests are but a small sample of indicators related to a narrow range of subskills in reading. What is more, the sub-skills selected are those which are the easiest to test in a paper-pencil testing situation and not necessarily those that are most important. These subskills are by no means purported to cover a full range of what constitutes reading.

Thus, aspects of reading that standardized tests do not measure well, such as critical reading and the appreciation of literature are generally omitted. Yet, those very skills, the ability to analyze and make judgments about what one reads and the development of lifetime reading habits are considered by most as basic to reading instruction.

Schools should be encouraged to evaluate basic skills by means other than the use of standardized minimal basic skills tests alone. Informal evaluation techniques such as rating scales, checklists, reports, interviews, and attitude questionnaires are important means of measuring progress and tend to give the kind of ongoing diagnostic information required to plan for future instruction.

Tied to most minimum basic testing programs is a follow-up plan for those children or those districts where large numbers of children fail to meet a predetermined minimum standard. In most instances, these follow-up procedures are strictly remedial in nature, characterized by a pull-out program completely separate from the regular basic skills instruction.

Where poor achievement in basic skills is evidenced, districts would do well to conduct a thorough internal review and self assessment of the entire basic skills program. This would include core, developmental programs, kindergarten through grade twelve, as well as any specialized programs of a categorical nature. Monies provided for follow-up should be used to strengthen the entire basic skills program rather than to merely add an instructional component, which in many instances, is unrelated to the rest of the curriculum.

Defining What is Basic

Perhaps nothing surrounding the topic of basic skills instruction has produced more controversy than the question of what is basic. One can easily understand why the members of the general public, being so diverse in their backgrounds and expectations, would have trouble coming to some agreement of this topic. However, it is not only those among the general public that fail to reach concensus, educators themselves have a wide variety of opinions on this topic.

The basics are sometimes equated with "survival" skills. These are characterized as the fundamental abilities one needs in order to function in everyday

life. The ability to complete a driver's license application and to read a simple menu would be considered basic survival skills.

Another view of the basics would simply suggest that there is a body of knowledge that represents the foundation of all other learning. While opinions may vary between individuals and groups, one component is certain to be included. That component is the ability to read.

After considerable deliberation, the Congress of the United States agreed upon the following definition for the Title II Basic Skills Improvement Legislation effective October 1, 1979 through September 30, 1983:

> ". . .to improve instruction so that all children are able to master the skills of reading, mathematics and oral and written communication."
> (Public Law 95-561)

This new definition represents an important step forward in that it includes virtually all of the means by which humans communicate. Wisely interpreted, it has potential for positive outcomes from the basic skills curriculum.

It should inspire schools and teachers to take a total look at their curriculum(s) and seek ways to integrate these skills into a communications program. Reading teachers would become more conscious of the relationship between reading and writing, and reading and listening, reading and oral expression, as well as between reading, computing, and mathematical problem solving.

Integrating the Basic Skills

Let us take a brief look at some of these relationships. The oral and written use of any language involves the projection of meaning. Both the reader and the listener must bring meaning to the message if comprehension is to take place. Writers and speakers also project meaning as they attempt to communicate their thoughts to others.

Written and oral communication involve the use and interpretation of symbols. Whether the symbols involve the use of speech or print, they are merely representations of experience. The ability to decode and encode experience through symbols is a developmental process that begins at birth. The experiential base from which the child draws in order to communicate, remains the same whether or not the communication takes place through print or speech.

The interrelatedness between written and oral language is demonstrated in other ways as well. Humans use language to communicate both knowledge and feelings. Thus, oral and written communication serve a broad range of cognitive and affective needs. Vocabulary development and a sense of the variety of possibilities for the use of language, including a sense of story, become inportant to the development of communications skills regardless of mode. It is not surprising that children who are successful in one aspect of language development are likely to be successful in the others.

We know that reading symbols is involved in both mathematical computation and problem solving. Math computation involves reading a set of symbols and performing some type of cognitive operation with them. It frequently requires the child to read in different directions from that which he or she is accustomed. The ability to shift to reading from right to left, top to bottom, or bottom to top something tabu in reading ordinary prose, is an absolute requirement for success in mathematical computation.

Solving math problems also requires a specialized kind of reading. The specialized vocabulary and the dense conceptual load found in mathematical problems offer a challenge to the reader that requires training in specific communications skills.

Looking at reading as it relates to the other communications skills suggests that it be viewed as part of a total communications process. It is a process that enables adults and children alike to receive and express information for work and pleasure. The fact that reading is a communications process and not an

end in itself has important implications for the basic skills curriculum.

Process and Content

As with the other basic skills, reading should not be viewed as an isolated subject apart from the content of interest and importance to children. Thus, both the natural and social sciences and literature of all types are vital parts of the basic skills curriculum. These areas of content are the "stuff" which makes reading an essential skill.

From the very beginning, children should be encouraged to read for meaning and with purpose. Comprehension of the content should be a primary goal of students throughout the grades. Unless the material makes sense, unless it can be enjoyed, applied, or linked to prior learning in some way then the student should reject it as nonsense that adds little or nothing to his or her reading development or life.

When developing curriculum it is important to keep in mind that what is basic must be construed as the minimum essentials and not the entire range of the curriculum. Otherwise, there is danger that the minimum may become the maximum and that which is basic becomes all there is.

We must also refrain from viewing the basics as some type of foundational underpinning that is required before the really important learning takes place. Right from the beginning the full range of skills considered to be important in developing competent readers must be included.

Thus, skills such as the ability to infer meaning from the printed page and to demonstrate an understanding of the writer and his/her craft should be included. These skills can and should begin at the earliest read-aloud stages of reading development.

Summary

It is not by chance, that without exception, reading is always included in any definition of the basic skills. Reading teachers have always been in the business of teaching basic skills. The current emphasis on the importance of basic skills is not new to the reading profession. Nor is the increasing awareness of the role of reading as it relates to the other language arts. Reading is truly fundamental—a basic human right. It must neither be taught in isolation from the other communications processes nor treated as an entity in itself apart from the content that makes it one of mankind's most valuable tools.

"Basic Skills: Focus on Reading" is the text of an unpublished speech presented at the Basic Skills Conference, Washington, D.C., December 5-7, 1978. Printed by permission of the author.

Should We Teach The Basics Or The Humanities In Reading?

JEANNE S. CHALL

It would be interesting to write a history of reading instruction in terms of the relative emphasis placed on the teaching of reading skills as compared to the humanistic aspects of reading—the applications and uses of reading for knowing, feeling, and appreciating. I think such a history would reveal the preference for one or the other emphasis during particular historical periods and by given educators and by authors of instructional materials.

I should like to speculate that the present time seems to be appropriate for an emphasis on the basic skills what with the continued declines in achievement scores—on the SAT, on standardized reading achievement tests particularly among high school students, and the legal suits against school systems by parents whose children graduated from high school barely literate. We should remember that the call for basic skills in reading came first not from professionals, but from laymen, from legislators, and from business leaders. Although there are differences in their views of what a "return to the basics" should mean, I think a history would reveal a common desire that more children and young people should achieve in reading better than they were achieving in the middle 1970's and that an emphasis on the most essential reading skills would improve achievement.

I think our history would also reveal that some teachers and schools in the 1970's were already stressing basic skills with little time given to such "humanistic" aspects of reading as reading a book and writing about it. This would, I think, also be more characteristic of teachers of the primary grades and teachers of lower achievers at the middle grades, for it is harder to make use of reading when reading skills are limited.

Let me return more directly to the issue of basic versus humanistic aspects of reading. From my viewpoint, learning to read in its fullest sense, from the beginning to the most mature levels, requires both an exposure to and a facile knowledge of reading skills and wide reading of books of all kinds at increasing levels of complexity, maturity and challenge. It takes years to acquire both aspects of reading. The skills, from simple decoding to making inferences on complex materials, takes years. It takes even longer to read the books and poems, newspapers and magazines, encyclopedias and plays, manuals and ads to learn to comprehend them, appreciate them, and know how to use them for pleasure and knowledge. In other words, from the start, there needs to be an emphasis both on the skills of reading and on the human uses of it. From the beginning children learn that books and other printed materials contain the accumulated knowledge of mankind and that this is available to all who have the skill and background knowledge to read. Thus, the humanistic aspect of reading includes not only the use of reading for knowing about literature and the arts but about sciences and technology as well. It would seem that if we want our children to be able to do this, we will have to give them not only skills but the practice of reading good books and many books.

From time to time, people who wish to correct an overemphasis on teaching

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of skills give the impression that learning the skills of reading—even at the first grade level—can and should be done only through a "humanistic" approach. They seem to say that wide reading, even before basic skills are taught, is the only way to teach the basic skills. They say, further, that basic skills teaching is unnecessary and even harmful for acquiring the humanistic attitudes toward reading.

I regret to say that I have not been able to locate research evidence to back up these claims. The existing evidence seems to indicate that each stage of reading requires a different balance of skills versus application—with the earlier levels needing relatively more direct teaching of skills. But even here, applications are needed through listening to stories, through oral reading of stories and plays and the like. Thus, although the skills are necessary for most children, and a stronger emphasis on skills is needed in the earlier grades the humanistic aspects must not be forgotten even then.

To conclude—reading is a very complex ability made up of both the skills of reading and the understandings and applications of what is read. Both must be learned and practiced at all levels of reading, although a different balance may be appropriate at different stages of reading development and at the same stage for different individuals.*

References

[1] *See Chall, J.S. "The great debate: Ten years later, with a modest proposal for reading stages," *Theory and practice of early reading*. Lauren B. Resnick and Phyllis A. Weaver (Eds.), Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1979.

[2] For a fuller treatment, see Chall, J.S. *Stages of reading development*. New York: McGraw-Hill, in press.

Teaching The Basic Skills To Live Children

ROMA GANS

Young Jerry, an eager first grader, was asked by his grandmother, after his first month in school, "And does your teacher teach you how to read?" After a pause, Jerry replied, "No, not really. We just learn broken-up words." An entire philosophy regarding children and teaching the basics is involved in this statement. And regrettably, far too many first graders could make a similar response.

A casual look at an infant's learning in the first year reveals the subtle dynamic that propels him or her in life. The infant quickly learns to recognize family members, the process of eating, noticing, enjoying and reacting to situations — and beginning to talk. There is much repetition, the same banging of a spoon against a dish, the same syllable babbled over and over. This is an integral part of an infant's system of learning.

All, including slow learners, do not remain passive, merely accepting what's being done for them. Some of the youngest may even protest being bathed and dressed. They learn quickly to communicate, "This I like, this I don't."

As youngsters mature, we see them demonstrate their alertness, noticing what often to us is scarcely perceptible, creating playthings out of household utensils and always full of action. When in a comfortable and safe place to grow, they are actively learning, yes, teaching themselves. They latch on to what appeals using imitation as a technique. They try to do what they see older siblings and adults do.

This includes drawing, dancing, singing and writing. They build with alphabet blocks and soon they want to call letters by their names. And again, as in their infant stage, they tend to do the same thing over and over up to a point. That point is that fine moment between satisfaction in learning by doing and boredom because there is no challenge any longer.

It is only natural that children who see others read and are read to, start first to imitate then begin to read signs, names and words for themselves. "Look what I can do" and "See what I know" is the motivating sentiment which is apparent, even if not verbally expressed.

Before five, via contacts with siblings and others of their age, they acquire social techniques of communicating, cooperating and of sensing a feeling of belonging. Yet, they protect the personal importance they feel. Not one can stand to be by-passed.

Then comes Kindergarten. Each must face what for some is a traumatic experience, the sharing with a large number, one adult, the teacher. The more they as creative individuals are recognized the easier this adjustment becomes.

Basic skills are an inherent part of the group's living so the youngsters continue to grow. They learn to count, to measure, to weigh materials needed in baking, building, designing. They enjoy browsing in books, listening to stories, noticing the teacher write memos. They ask for help in exploring their own skills. They watch others in their group; they get suggestions from the teacher. A

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varied, rich program for each sparks their imagination and boosts their courage to take the next steps. Some rules and regulations are necessary and, if sensible, can be understood by fives. Their understanding is actually the beginning of civics.

The distinctive quality of a good Kindergarten program is the respect shown for the naturalness of young children's learning. They need to explore, initiate, imitate, and acquire new ideas, new ways of behaving as they did in infancy, but each one on a mature level. Even though the range of abilities may vary widely, if the climate is one of welcome to all, competetiveness doesn't enter, rather differences are noticed and accepted.

Now, insert into such a natural climate that boosts child-growth a set, prescribed reading-readiness program and at once a new element is inserted. Not only children, but parents develop an uneasiness. The more the program becomes prescribed or teacher dominated, the more the original dynamic, that self-propelling learning quality of children, is squashed.

Not uncommon is the repetition of an item or exercise for those who already have mastered it, which only adds to their boredom. Gone is their eagerness, spontaneity and excitement. Some five-year-olds start to "hate school" through the daily application of misfitted, so-called "scientific" approaches to beginning reading.

Some, the more intellectually agile, may take all tasks in stride, even if they already are beginning readers as so many of today's Kindergarteners are. Others may plod along obediently, not even aware of the connection between what they are doing and reading. A few may "not relate" as one teacher described her situation. And, in spite of the desire of many teachers to keep all children in the forefront of concern, those succeeding in reading-readiness tasks take on a special halo. And so does it with some parents. The fact that the prescribed exercises are actually denying the proper reading progress for some, even dulling their previous interests and self-propelling skills, may go unnoticed.

One veteran teacher, who found herself under orders to have a daily time-consuming dose of an elaborate reading-readiness program, said, "I had to be honest with the children. I told them this is what somebody wants us to do. We'll do it as good as we can, but we'll also go on with reading our charts and stories and our quiet time looking at books."

As today's children continue into the primary grades, anyone who listens to a group that is having a truly free discussion must be impressed. What they gather from TV, radio, travel and multiple personal contacts is amazing. To them, the world is exciting, the pace is rapid, there is always something *going on.*

The wholesome interests can be the ignition cap for further learning. Experiences in science, in music, art and building emerge. Reading to find out, measuring, counting, writing are applied in order to reach desired outcomes which the individuals have helped define. Variations in ability are often minimized by the group-cohesiveness which develops, as young Jennie demonstrated when a group got ready to show the principal the planter which they had made. One writer had written a sign "Watch our beans grow." Jennie copied the sign, working laboriously and sticking with it until it was finished so she could show it to the principal.

Through day after day of purposeful work, which includes repetition geared to fit children's need to fix their learning, children in the primary grades grow from beginners to a high degree of independence, not only in the basic skills, but also in their work habits. They learn to stick with something until they get it, to ask for help when stymied, to test out their new-found ideas and to assess their own progress. "I want to write this over. I didn't write this so good," was Sydney's comment to the teacher after he had written a memo to his mother. Guiding such self-evaluation is an essential part of a good program.

The natural progress for each child demands three important matters not

given adequate attention in today's school life which in many classrooms is hectic. The first is the relationship of regular attendance to success in learning. Frequent absences and/or long absences throw youngsters out-of-gear with themselves. Even when warmly welcomed back and given special help by teacher and peers, some seem to lose heart. Their spark fades. Therefore, home guidance to establish good daily attendance is a must.

Children learn not only by seeing, but also by hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. They do have five senses. All need to develop in acuity. Some learn better when more than one sense, *seeing*, is involved. They need conversation. Every child needs to hear himself/herself talk and grow in conversational abilities. The restlessness in many of today's youngsters has turned some classrooms into silent, pencil or crayon-pushing factories. Work books, scrub-in pictures multi-graphed, and other quiet, individual work consumes most of the day.

Adequate help for teachers from volunteers and teacher aides are essential to avoid such low-learning classrooms. Even if children's volatile behavior is not the cause, but rather a teacher's preference, a normal environment with children speaking, reading orally, and listening, must be established. The multi-sensory learning need of young children is so well recognized that to deny them is actually malpractice in teaching.

The third essential component is repetition — yes — drill — to fix new learnings. Not the boring everybody does-dose that leads to the boredom in the nearly dead classroom, but rather, the practice geared to fit each one. Children themselves guide a teacher in recognizing the need. "I checked myself. I now am sure I can spell those six words" said second grade Molly. Self-evaluation acquired through early grades develops this ability.

Research is full of studies of why children fail in the basic skills. A careful study of these three factors as they effect individual children may prevent the tragedy of low learning on the part of many, the cost of remedial efforts, and the loss of talent among our adults.

When one contrasts the natural tendency and effort youngsters reveal from birth on to become independent human beings with the all too-common inhibiting and unnatural materials and methods they meet in so-called "educational" environments, one must marvel at their ability to learn. It seems as if there is a wish to counter their creation to be live, vocal, active creatures by remaking them into passive clods, sitting silently, not moving their lips, moving only their fingers and eyeballs. Thank God, they are powerful and resist. With the numbers of dedicated educators and parents, in spite of pressures to the contrary, most children are developing the basic skills in homes and schools that respect their eagerness and ability to learn. And lastly, all the foregoing statements describing a humane process of teaching children the skills do not cost more money, rather less. The cost of uniform materials that fail to be useable by all are pared and part of it used to provide the variety serviceable to all. Even of far greater importance is the boosting effect to youngsters at the critical age which tends to set the pattern of accomplishment for their later years. The fact that some schools maintain an average comparable to standard test norms is a tragic defense of their programs. The only worthy goal is *the best for each child — because this is the only life a child has.*

On Reading Story

LELAND B. JACOBS

There is a need to be more discriminating in the discussion of literature, whether that literature is found in basal readers, anthologies, magazines, or hard-cover or paperback full-length books.

It would seem that those developing children's textbooks in which stories are found have too often been more concerned about decoding skills or other matters than they have about comprehension of literature. So their proposals of questions about story content and of discussion practices have been counter-productive so far as comprehension, appreciation, and enjoyment of literature is concerned. If such exploitation of literary reading is to be stopped, we as teachers need to do some rethinking of our conception of story and of appropriate practices to use in teaching the reading of story.

What is story? Stripped to the barest essentials, I define story as characters *coping in terms of a quest*. Full consideration of what is involved in story requires more elaboration, more explication than is possible here. I must be content to propose that:

- Story finds its bearing in a character or characters made sufficiently interesting that the reader wants to find out what happens to the individual(s). Without such a well-developed character, a story remains superficial, of little consequence no matter how much effort has been put into making it adventurous, humorous, myste-

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ous, for example.

- The central character's copings become the plot. In other words, what makes the plot believable is the character's attempts to cope with aspects of living, sometimes physical, but also sometimes emotional, social, or intellectual. The story happenings, incidents, events, interactions, dialogue come into clear focus because they are necessary for the character to live through them if he/she is to get on with whatever that individual is attempting to do, to be, to accomplish.

- What helps the reader to comprehend fully the character's copings is the kind of quest that the character is engaged in. Again, it might be a physical quest, as a journey, an overcoming of a handicap. It might be an emotional quest, as facing up to a death, or overcoming the consequences of being a foster child. As a social quest, it might be dealing with an interracial friendship, or participating in an ecological project. As a spiritual quest, it could be the matter of wrestling with a conflict in values. Whatever comes through to the reader as the major thrust of the main character's seeking behavior gives the story its sense of quest, which markedly affects the inclusion of events and the sequencing of events and the sequencing of plot.

- Character(s) coping in terms

of a quest can be cast as fanciful, romantic, or realistic. If fanciful, it is definitely "make-believe." If romantic, the story is improbable but not impossible. If realistic, the story is entirely possible. Notice that the same quest can be treated in any one of these ways. But the characters' behaviors and their copings as they attempt to achieve desired ends will differ markedly in terms of which way is being used for the story.

If such is what is involved in story, then what is done to guide children's comprehension must square with that conception. And it would seem that, for discussion, the teacher would want to begin with thinking about character, using questions like:

> What seems to be important for us to know about this character? How does where the character lives affect him/her? When he/she lives? In what ways does the character change because of what happens to him/her?

It would seem that next the teacher would want to lead discussion to the kind of quest involved:

> What does the character (use the character's name, such as Michael, Dora, Mrs. Blake, the old man, Paddy Porcupine) want to do? To be? To accomplish? Why is this accomplishment important to the character? Is this a quest that seems reasonable in terms of what we know about the character? Is the outcome of the quest what was anticipated?

Having established the children's comprehension of what seems significant about characters and quest, the teacher can turn to the copings to see how the plot helps or hinders, leads ahead or backwards, moves fast or slowly toward the character's accomplishment of what is sought. For discussion of plot, questions like the following seem appropriate:

> What helped the character toward achievement of what is wanted? What hindered? Who helped the main character? How so? Who didn't help? When did the main character seem to be most sure of success? When closest to failure? Was the outcome of the quest satisfying to the main character? How so?

As has been said before, in all such questions, characters' names will be used by the teacher that the reality of the events, the story's believability is kept intact. For what one wants as the larger outcome of story comprehension is the development of what has been called "the educated imagination," by one literary theoretician, and what one eminent present-day writer has called "not what *is* but what *might be.*" We want children to learn early that literature creates a world of the mind — a world that *is* but never *was* actually.

From what has been said thus far, one will notice that certain types of questions commonly found in basal readers, text books that use stories, are not being suggested for use as aids to story comprehension:

> Factual or informational questions, as:
> *What did you learn about Alaska from this story?*
> Questions that encourage moralizing, as:
> *What does this story teach us about telling lies?*
> Questions that take the reader outside the story, as:
> *Would you do what Eric did?*
> Mere plot questions, as:
> *What next? What next? What last?*
> Innocuous questions, as:
> *Did you like it? Was that a funny story?*

Such questions do nothing to help children comprehend story, since all these types of queries take the reader

outside, or away from the story rather than keep them inside, and it is only inside its created world that the story lives; that is becomes believable; that it helps to develop an educated imagination.

Of course we who teach need to help children comprehend factual and informational material. But how forutnate is the child who has a teacher who makes clear the differences as well as the likenesses in comprehending the factual and the fictional, who zeros in on the kinds of discussion questions that foster appropriate understanding of fact and of story.

To learn to read story well — to know what story is; to appreciate the well-developed story; to enjoy being extended in one's imagination by a capable writer — is surely a worthy outcome of one's schooling in reading. What literary reading comprehension does for a person is very much what James Russell Lowell said it would do: "enable us to see with the keenest eyes, hear with the finest ears and listen to the sweetest voices of all times."

Lyric 17

José Garcia Villa

First, a poem must be magical,
Then musical as a sea-gull.
It must be a brightness moving
And hold secret a bird's flowering.
It must be slender as a bell,
And it must hold fire as well.
It must have the wisdom of bows
And it must kneel like a rose.
It must be able to hear
The luminance of dove and deer.
It must be able to hide
What it seeks, like a bride.
And over all I would like to hover
God, smiling from the poem's cover.

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The Reading Act Within

M. JERRY WEISS

Alvin Toffler, in his new book, *The Third Wave*, says:

> Finally there are movements aimed at literally turning back the clock — like the back-to-basics movement in United States schools. Legitimately outraged by the disaster in mass education, it does not recognize that a de-massified society calls for new educational strategies, but seeks instead to restore and enforce Second Wave uniformity in the schools. Nevertheless, all these attempts to achieve uniformity are essentially the rearguard actions of a spent civilization. The thrust of Third Wave change is toward increased diversity, not toward the further standardization of life. And this is just as true of ideas, political convictions, sexual proclivities, educational methods, eating habits, religious views, ethnic attitudes, musical taste, fashions, and family forms as it is of automated production.
>
> An historic turning point has been reached, and standardization, another of the ruling principles of Second Wave civilization, is being replaced. (pp. 273-274)

What could be "academically" more personal or more intimate than the reading act? An individual visualizes or internalizes the variety of ideas stimulated by a writer's select choice of words to convey ideas. The action or lack of action, the emotional responses or lack of such responses, are all due to the way a reader responses to a particular writer's production. Who could or should predict the responses to literature? What could be more dangerous to a dynamic, creative society than the standardization of responses?

Try this brief activity. Copy the following list of words on a sheet of paper:

Money	Success
Love	Peace
Health	Friendship
Family	Honesty

As you examine these words, rank them in order of importance to you. Beside the most important, place the number one (1); beside the least important, place the number eight (8). Each word is to have only a single designated number, between one and eight, assigned to it.

Now write a brief paragraph explaining why you ranked the words in this order. Ask a friend to do the same. Compare your responses to your friend's. If there are differences in the ranking, to what would you attribute these?

This is, indeed, one of the *humanistic* elements, a sense of personal values, a reaction to a variety of situations, which is a key part of the reading process. Words out of context cause readers to project meanings and experiences; it is no easy assignment to explain what these words conjure up in the minds of readers or why such idea associations take place. This, a part of critical, interpretive thinking, is germane to effective, enjoyable, and efficient reading.

Words in context often force readers to recall specific moments in their lives

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which are similar to what is being read. When my mother died, I was pained by the loss, and cancer was a "horror" word since it brought so much pain and a sense of helplessness. I turned to reading in an attempt to escape my real world and to find other thoughts, characters, events, actions as a source for temporary distraction! I chose to read a number of best sellers — mysteries, love stories, tales of adventures, etc., — and I was amazed at the number of times *Death, pain, suffering, and CANCER,* appeared in these books. My immediate reaction was to put such books aside; but, then, I reasoned that this would accomplish little. It was I who was projecting personal feelings, experiences, a deep sense of grief into these words and incidents, even if the characters involved didn't deserve such feelings on my part. How was I going to stop myself from doing this? Did I really want to stop? Should I stop?

If these questions seem perplexing, if they seem abnormal in the study of reading, then I am that drummer who marches to a very different tune. The *core* of reading seems to be so seldom discussed in professional texts, committed, as they often should be, to methodology rather than the "unpredictable" effects of words and ideas upon readers. I am among a rare group who is equally concerned with the impact of reading upon the reader.

The humanist in the reading process "feels" the writer. Ask yeshiva students to explain what is happening to them as they read Milton Meltzer's powerful, nonfiction work, *Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust.* Why the yeshiva students? Their home, cultural, and religious activities often have included emotional discussions about anti-semitism and this period of history which many gentile families sometimes miss, overlook, or talk about in less passionate terms. Ask black students to react to poems by Nikki Giovanni or Maya Angelou, which center on segregation, indignities, caustic remarks, and behaviors which sparked civil rights activities.

History students could be intellectually stimulated by William Manchester's *The Glory and the Dream.* How many recall the details Manchester provides in this tome filled with conflicts, controversy, and conscious-raising events? Who emerge as heroes? What events and/or actions might identify heroes for today or tomorrow? Do popular culture and mass media consciously determine the making of such heroes?

Ask any science student which great scientist he or she would like to meet. Popular books on Galileo, Pasteur, Einstein, Freud, Madame Curie, Jonas Salk, among others, would provide sources for "personal" talk shows with some of the greatest minds whose ideas shook treasured tenets and changed the developments of civilizations.

One discovery, one humble idea, examined thoroughly, tried out, discussed and debated, resolved, could project an individual from anonymity to immortality. What discoveries will take place during the remainder of this century can significantly alter the fields of health, medicine, industry and technology?

One personal experience can become the focus for creative expression. Hear the cry, "I am alive! I am!" Bob Fosse, famed dancer, Broadway director, and choreographer, used film to depict his close encounter with death. Critics and movie-goers may vary in their appraisals of this movie, *All That Jazz,* but Mr. Fosse chose lights, camera, action to share his words and feelings about life and death.

There is a literary process in any artistic work as the creators organize their thoughts to communicate their talents. Readers, viewers, or prospective customers continue to have the right to make judgments, but in a standardized society, how many choices will there be? How many creators will come forth? What penalties and rewards do creative people receive for their efforts in defense of self-expression?

There is a world, a real world, not restricted by academic rules and regulations. For some, the letter "A" is not the first letter learned. For others, filling in blanks to get a "more perfect whole"

will produce panic, frustration and subsequent degradation. Yet, some of these same people have other ways, other built-in mechanisms for developing their perceptions, "more perfect wholes." Sights and sounds can trigger myriad responses to the essential questions conceived with the qualities of life. *The American Way of Laughing: From Benjamin Franklin to Woody Allen* and *More Tales Out of School: Humor in the Classroom* could appeal to those who enjoy social commentary and criticism with a bit of wit. Fables, folklore, and foibles are products of human endeavors. What printer could be blamed for producing the delicious effect as a result of these specific words: "Cyrus McCormick invented the raper!" What a difference an "e" can make! One little error and there can be laughter. But there also can be condemnation, cursing, dismissals, tears, in a world that goes on. The ultimate payment to the printer might be the loss of a job; however, the reader who stumbles on the error will do double takes, not quite believing that one's knowledge of inventors and inventions could be so incredibly challenged and amusing.

The serious readers, the book borrowers, buyers, stealers, are completely fascinated with the miracles of words and language. Word choices and arrangements strike cerebral/cardiac chords, echoing throughout the entire organism, and produce love, hate, passionate, dispassionate responses.

Look at any picture in a magazine or newspaper advertisement. Use words to convey the exact scene before your eyes, the desired effect, and the actual effect. How many words did you use to describe the actual picture? How exact are your words? If you gave these words to a photographer or an artist, would such a person be capable of reproducing the picture you are describing? If there should be discrepancies, to what would you attribute these?

Language is the master of deception through conception. The poetry of Stephen Crane, Judith Viorst, Robert Frost, Edgar Allan Poe offer so many different visions for readers. How concise, precise a poem must be. So few words, yet how a mind spins from the ideas and images presented. Who can ever forget the amazing cast of characters in Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*? He has created so many familiar voices, so many secrets, problems, comic/tragic personalities who arouse compassion because readers care and now understand the frailty of being human. Nancy Larrick has edited a marvelous collection of "people poems" in *Crazy To Be Alive in Such a Strange World*. Each poem, some matched with photographs, evoke a person or people worth reading about, getting to know, thinking about, relating to. Who among these people would make an interesting friend?

Lyrics, as parts of songs, continue the appreciation of poetry. Stevie Wonder's "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life" and Hal David's "What The World Needs Now Is Love Sweet Love" offer excellent opportunities for teaching a love of language. (So many times I've heard teachers say, "These children can't remember anything!" How wrong they are! So many students know most of the words to songs at the top of the charts. Using their knowledge and their interests, a good teacher could use lyrics to teach a number of reading skills.)

First graders were taught the lyrics to "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life." The teacher gave students sheets of white shelving paper, and assigned students' lines from the song and asked them to illustrate what they thought the lines meant. The drawings were phenomenal! She taped together the drawings, printed the words beneath the appropriate illustrations, and created a picture-song reader. The children loved it! They learned each word, including sight words, and were eager to make more song books. Other favorites were "Up, Up and Away," "Tea For Two," "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head," "I Write The Songs," and "Rudolph, The Red Nosed Reindeer."

Upper grade students were asked to teach classmates their favorite songs. Students took dittoed copies of the songs and were asked to find photo-

graphs, pictures in newspapers or in magazines, or ones taken by themselves to produce "photo-lyrics." What wonderful imaginations emerged from the lyrics to "Over The Rainbow," "Copacabana," "Evergreen," "The Way We Were," and popular songs by Kiss, the Bee Gees, Styx, Roberta Flack, George Benson, Donnie and Marie Osmond, among others.

Role playing is a wonderful introduction to drama. Students are given a problem, and then they are asked to "act out" the situation and subsequent events. Shortly thereafter, students can be introduced to one-act plays, to be followed later by full length plays, including musical comedy. "Reader's Theatre" is fun and offers the opportunity to create dramatic activities from a wide range of printed resources. Students' interpretations of various roles offer many opportunities for discussion and for enhancing critical thinking and interpretive reading.

Humanism in reading recognizes that readers become involved. Something happens inside. Teachers should provide a variety of activities through which a student demonstrates what's happening as a result of the interaction with the printed page. When teachers hear students explain the sources for their ideas, they remove the too heavy emphasis on right-wrong answers. It's time we spent more effort on studying how children think, how children react. Through greater concentration on such assignments will personal literacy be achieved? The individual is the reader. He/she takes in the printed symbols and may produce a variety of responses, possibly demonstrating unique abilities and talents, providing a key function by recognizing that reading, indeed, leads to active endeavors. Students build on what they know, what they want to know, and in an environment that emphasizes the positive and appreciative characteristics of reading. The humanist teacher thoroughly enjoys the minds of students and the variety of ideas any classroom can produce. Thirty answers, all different? What now? Even the *Book of Lists* can demonstrate the delight of what people do, did, believe, believed, achieve, achieved.

Given the word *Key*, how many associations can you make with this printed symbol? The more the merrier. Play with your ideas. Create situations in which this three letter item can demonstrate meanings and applications for you.

This is the power of language. The mind constructs through the slightest suggestion. A "key to life," a "lock and key," "the exact key for your voice," or the "key to your heart" are all intellectual, feeling symbols which say so much for and about you. Creation — ah, the enjoyment in that process — is an ultimate result for any person who succeeds and finds delight in language. So handle "the answer keys" with care. For beyond the response is a reasoning process. Gaining an understanding of that amazing mental ability should be a humbling and humanizing process. When the teacher knows enough to understand, and when through such understanding he/she demonstrates care and appreciation, literates will arrive in greater abundance and with greater insights to make "The Third Wave" a remarkable phase of civilization

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little miss mystery
sitting in
green; painting

the forest white
her fingers
using a pointy

black brush she's
making
the forest Clean

Arthur Vanderborg

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Reading Behind The Headlines

FRANK JENNINGS

A quarter of a century ago Rudolf Flesch published his book, *Why Johnny Can't Read,* in which he asserted that too many American school children were not learning to read very well and a shockingly large number were not learning to read at all.

Many people believed him. The book soared up the best-seller lists across the country. Educationists met in conferences, held workshops, wrote scathing critiques. School boards increased their budgets for reading instruction. Publishers rushed to print with retreads of the ancient phonics texts advocated by Flesch.

The tens of thousands of research reports issued in the two decades since then have continued to tell us that Johnny still does not read very well. The reports claim that adult illiteracy is almost pandemic, that the quality of writing skills—the other face of reading—is degenerating in the colleges and even in the professions. They also reveal that the great and enormously costly federal government programs in reading instruction come almost always to nought. The children of disadvantaged families seem to make only minimal gains, briefly, before they sink into illiterate, unemployable dolor.

These reports will be back, but something will still be missing from them. Somehow it has escaped the attention of critic and defender alike that most children tend to read better elsewhere than in school. Most children *do* grow up to become adults who use the ability to read to get information, find answers to problems, and have a good time with a fat book that entertains them at least as well as television.

Roger Farr, president of the International Reading Association, was quoted recently in *Language Arts* (an official journal of the National Council of Teachers of English), as saying that "Research in the 1970s has provided ample evidence that fundamental illiteracy [in the United States] has been eliminated for all except for the most seriously physically and psychologically handicapped. Furthermore, comparisons of average reading levels of students over time indicate that today's students read as well or better than those in the past. With fundamental literacy for all a near reality we are aiming at higher degrees of literacy."

Those remarks go counter to yesterday's (and tomorrow's) headlines about the decline of reading scores, achievement scores and the college entrance examinations. (The declines are real but almost beside the point.) Farr's observations certainly support the sense that the lay public appears to have: There are still unmet needs, as evidenced by the complaints of the competency testers. There are still grievous failures. But school testing will always miss the hidden fact of *operational* literacy.

John R. Bormuth, in "Value and Volume of Literacy," an article published in *Visible Language* last year, makes the point that the public almost always initially responds to warnings of the literacy experts with "grave concern, showing that it is well aware of the vital role that literacy plays. But that concern quickly subsides, suggesting either that

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the public is as fickle as cynics would have us believe or that it knows something that the experts do not, that it is getting strong counterindications that are more credible than the expert's evidence."

Bormuth goes on to say that the public sees so many people so often reading and writing, carrying and consulting books, magazines and newspapers that it finds mountains of even trivial evidence that the printed page and its reader is alive and well.

Bormuth also views literacy "not solely as an esthetic endeavor, as a problem of educational concern, as a matter of social equity, or as a necessity of democratic government, but also and primarily as an *economic* [his emphasis] activity that is deeply embedded in the culture at large and woven inextricably into the processes by which we win our bread and board."

The crucial point in Bormuth's brilliant and lucid essay is that literacy, however defined, is widely but not quite universally enjoyed; that the production of literacy (the teaching of it) is worth far more than it costs to produce; that it is "one of our nation's most important economic activities" and finally that "personal and social investment in literacy has been growing rapidly." After all, the burgeoning information industry, no matter how mindboggingly complex its technology or its circuitry, depends at its base on some "ink-stained wretch" writing words that will have to be read and understood by the consumer.

In short, there is strong evidence that the reading teacher and attendant specialists are far better at their jobs than they pretend to be.

For teachers of language and reading are the ones who are primarily responsible for the vast growth of the reading public, for all the people buying books and magazines in supermarkets, in drug stores and at airports. Teachers, more than any other profession, have energized the development of those information service industries. Teachers, who despite their own self-denigration, are the ones who help nourish each generation of writers, poets, dramatists—perhaps especially when those artists and word-users deny that any teacher ever gave them a helping hand.

Yet teachers of our language are strangely ambivalent about their calling. It is a democratic tradition not to hold them in very high regard. They tolerate the pap of mindless texts used for most beginning readers. They gladly suffer the graceless prose and the truncated thinking found in most of the schoolbooks in most of the subjects through most of the school years. They make feeble leaps of faith when they invite their students to reach for the "higher degrees of literacy" that is our language heritage. But they wince when their pupils reject both pap and protein to read mysteries, and gothics, and low adventure and high smut, never being able to admit that the road to the mountaintops of literature often begins down in the bogs.

Such teachers must be cautioned not to put the marvelous and simple skills of reading and writing to dull pedagogic use too soon. Bruno Bettelheim, the child psychologist, was quoted in the *Washington Post* (11/25/80) as urging that the reading child be given more interesting material than is found in the babbling basal texts that assault the child's sense of logic and language decency. Too often, teachers, at the behest of curriculum-makers, are forced to make early reading instruction a dulling mechanical trade with no joy in it anywhere for themselves or the children. Bettelheim's recent book, *The Uses of Enchantment,* is a proper corrective here. He says, induct the child into our language through its folk and fairy tales, its poetry and songs, through the heritage of the great and abiding stories. Remember that the power of the child's language is vastly greater than the tiny vocabulary of the schoolbooks. Of course the reading child will miss things, who does not? The gain is almost always greater than any lapse or loss.

This induction should be easy and generally pleasurable because teachers and parents have so many allies, almost all of them working for pay; the editors

and publishers of inexpensive books, the comic strips in newspapers, the comic books that too many teachers are taught to hate, even the television hustlers shilling for cereals and toys.

For there is money in reading. Therefore publishers flourish. Professor Bormuth is precisely right: literacy is primarily an economic activity. Done well it can be everything else that makes life worthwhile. Westinghouse knows this. The International Paper Company knows this. So does IBM and so does Xerox. Each year big business spends school-budget-sized sums to promote, celebrate, and, yes, exploit the acquisition and improvement of reading and writing skills. Over many years, the International Paper Corporation has used space in mass circulation and special interest magazines, usually in two-page spreads, offering practical and attractive advice on how to read and write more effectively.

Yes, there is money in reading, and it is neither crass nor vulgar to recognize the fact. Look at the latest news of the large sums paid for the paperback rights to publish (sometimes) yet-to-be-written books. Look to the growth of bookstores, the independents as well as the large chains. Read all about the ever-expanding book clubs, the explosive growth of new and established magazines. The public is reading. The reading public is very large. Its range of interests is as wide as the culture and as deep as the intellectual heritage of civilization.

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HOME IDEAS FOR READING

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Reality Therapy And The Reading Process

BERNARD S. SHORE

The conventional response of most schools to children who are academically disabled is to blame the student. The student is "sick" and the school system is healthy. In Teaneck, New Jersey, a school system with 6,000 students, we were no different. Students who didn't read were referred to the Child Study Team for evaluation by Learning Disabilities Teacher/Consultants. Impressive educational prescriptions were compiled, students were tutored and re-tutored, but still, significant achievement was nil. Students were sent to psychiatrists, neurologists and psychologists, they were referred for psychotherapy and were counselled and re-counselled, but to our dismay, they still didn't learn to read.

How could these children continue to fail despite the intensive educational and therapeutic interventions? Was it possible that our assumption was wrong? Was the child who wouldn't learn sick, or was our educational system at fault? With our remedial panaceas exhausted, we decided to study the students who fail. Our sample consisted of fifty young men and women who, in the words of Thoreau, were living "lives of quiet desperation." These fifty students found little meaning in their school lives and were coming to school sporadically. They were alienated, confused, hopeless, lacking in conviction — hollow students witnessing the meaninglessness of school life. Many of these students experienced school as the poet Rilke wrote: "The time of school drags by with waiting and dread, with nothing but dreary things...." These fifty children were without self esteem; they were passive, bored, nihilistic. They had become labeled as the pariahs of the school and became the caste of failures — the *Unteachables.*

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Our task was defined as the construction, for these students, of an educational climate in which they could experience purpose and success, and develop a sense of self-worth. The ultimate success of this task depended upon whether we:

1. Could encourage these students to abandon an apathetic life style for more challenging involvement with their own educational experience?
2. Could we help these students to discover their authentic or "real self?"
3. Could we create a school without failure and teach these children to read?

Carl Rogers (1939) stated that the essence of teaching is a relationship between the teacher and the student. He has written:

> "I see the facilitation of learning as the aim of education....We know.... that the facilitation of such learning rests not upon the teaching skills of the leader, not upon his curricular planning....not upon his lectures and presentations, not upon an abundance of books, though each of these might at one time or another be utilized as an important resource. No, the facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities which exist in the personal relationship between the facilitator and the learner."

In this spirit we sought teachers who

could control their reactions to the surface behavior of our sample through the understanding that such behavior is often stimulated by symbolic distortions and displaced on the teacher. We sought teachers who were not afraid of rejection and who were aware that aberrant behavior that might seem irrational and aversive to adults could seem logical and appropriate to the student. We recruited teachers who viewed the failure pattern of these fifty students as a challenge to skill and creativity.

The gestalt of student failure is permeated by depersonalization and detachment, anonymity and alienation. The challenge was formidable; could we end the silent pathological partnership between student estrangement and teacher indifference?

The basic concepts of reality therapy became our philosophical framework. According to Glasser (1965), a success identity is achieved through the following pathways:

1. Giving and receiving love.
2. Gaining worth and recognition.
3. Receiving enjoyment and self-fulfillment.
4. Becoming self disciplined.

These pathways lead the individual from a failure identity to a success identity; from loneliness to involvement; from weakness to strength; from a life style dominated by the emotions of the moment to a life style of rational motivation. Translating these theoretical pathways into a pragmatic school program became another educational goal.

To establish a climate of intimacy and involvement, four classes were established away from the regular high school, with approximately fifty students.

The milieu of the classrooms was that of a comfortable library. There was no teacher desk dominating the room like a command post. Informal furniture in a carpeted room enhanced individualized work as well as small and large group instruction. For the student who needed to work alone there were carrels. There were also backrests against which students could recline while reading on the floor.

Administration had to lose its remoteness and become an active participant in the climate of openness. Secretarial staff was asked to respond with friendliness. Office personnel were sensitized to the goals of the program. Students who came into the office were treated in a cordial manner. (All too often the entrance of a child to a school office is seen as an invasion by Attila the Hun).

Students attended this program for 2½ hours a day, five times a week, for either a morning or afternoon session. For the remainder of the school day they were mainstreamed into carefully articulated programs in the high school. All students were high school students reading three or more years below grade level. They had been variously diagnosed as emotionally disturbed, neurologically or perceptually impaired, and/or socially maladjusted. They had demonstrated, in addition to their reading problems, one or more of the following characteristics over a period of time:

1. an inability to learn which could not be explained by intellectual or health factors.
2. an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
3. inappropriate behavior under normal conditions.
4. a general pervasive mood of unhappiness and depression.
5. a tendency to somatize pains or fears associated with personal or school problems.

The first success pathway in reality therapy — *Giving and Receiving Love* — requires that the relationship between teacher and student be one of mutual respect. Celia Houghton has described this relationship: ..."the respect the teacher has for the child as a person, for his uniqueness and his needs; the teacher must be willing to be personally involved with each child so that he may best respond to the changing individual needs of each child. The child's respect for the teacher is respect for a caring

person who has his best interests at heart and on whose help and fair judgment he can rely."

Mutual respect is more apt to develop when the teacher relates to students as individuals. This demands sensitivity, imagination, intelligence and energy. The teacher functions not only as a transmitter of information but as a facilitator of experiences which will stimulate verbal communication, thought, exploration and reading.

The second pathway to a success identity — *Gaining Worth and Recognition* — is the major goal of a school without failure. Diagnostic teaching creates a failure free environment. The rigid curriculum in the secondary school is too often a procrustean bed — a framework of unrealistic demands — a structure fraught with failure and painful experiences for the disabled learner. The Educational prescription for individualizing the learning process of handicapped students is an important management tool in our workshop to avoid failure experiences.

The diagnostic-remedial approach is based on assessment, formal and informal, of deficiencies in perceptual abilities and basic skill areas. The prescriptive dimension consists of the careful formulation of precise behavioral objectives and the use of highly specific remedial techniques geared to particular deficiencies.

The structured, sequential, prescriptive approach focused solely on deficits will not succeed with many alienated secondary students. Mechanized assembly line instruction all too often engenders resistance and underperformance.

Success is a reinforcer to learning. Instructional strategy for students who have known school failure requires the recognition of strengths and interests which have been recognized or ignored. Eli Bower (1965) has pointed out, "It may be more important in teaching reading to consider interest, excitement and the imaginative constructs of heroic or tragic deeds than to worry about vocabulary word meaning — phonics or phonic competencies. To be taught to read as a stolid mechanical process is to learn to use it in a mechanical way."

Diagnostic teaching involves not only an assessment of a student's specific learning skills but also of his/her learning style. Learning style refers to an individual's characteristic pattern of behavior when confronted with a problem. Different theorists have utilized a wide variety of language to describe model interactions or style. Despite semantic differences, more often than not, there is concurrence in the description of style. Some researchers have called these styles *rigid inhibited style, undisciplined style, acceptance-anxious style,* and *creative style.*

An individual using a rigid-inhibited style has a tightly closed system for processing information such that both intrapersonal and extrapersonal sources of information are suppressed. A person using an undisciplined style tends to be overly sensitive to intrapersonal sources of information and has not learned how to effectively utilize extrapersonal sources of information. A person utilizing an acceptance-anxious style tends to be overly sensitive to extrapersonal sources of information and has not learned how to effectively utilize intrapersonal sources of information. A person utilizing a creative style has learned how to harmonize the utilization of both extrapersonal and intrapersonal sources of information such that maximal utilization can be made of both.

Learning style seems to affect level of symbolization and language. Persons utilizing a rigid-inhibited style characteristically use language in a relatively concrete manner. Persons utilizing undisciplined and acceptance-anxious styles characteristically use language in a moderately abstract manner, and persons utilizing a creative style characteristically use language in a highly abstract manner.

The individual learning plan must also relate to individual differences in learning skills. We have found Kirk's (1969), psycholinguistic model useful in relating to classroom functioning, remedial planning and teaching methods.

The specific learning skills to which

we have related are:

1. Attention Skills
2. Visual Receptive Skills
3. Auditory-Receptive Skills
4. *Conceptual Skills*
5. Automatic Skills

The following case study is illustrative of our task: Roger came to us a large, sullen fifteen-year-old boy who, despite an I.Q. of 130, was reading on a second grade level. A product of a broken home, Roger's life style was that of a rigid, inhibited individual. Survival in a problem family that exploded periodically had resulted in a rigid security system. He was an isolate, walking to school alone and communicating only when spoken to. He was afraid to show initiative. His face was flushed with repressed anger. Despite his repressed anger, or perhaps because of it, Roger had a strong need for rules and structure and was threatened by ambiguity and uncertainty. His learning style was overwhelmingly auditory. He was one of those students who walk through life listening to a small radio.

For the individual with a rigid inhibited style an accepting adult is a necessity. Until such an individual feels safe he/she is too immobilized by anxiety to accept new information. A bridge between student and teacher was needed. The teacher discovered that Roger's major area of interest was World War II. Roger's reading level made the reading of books on this topic difficult. The teacher went to the Commission for the Blind and obtained for Roger some Talking Books on World War II, on the basis that Roger had a serious case of word blindness. In truth, this definition was appropriate.

It made little difference to us why Roger was interested in World War II. Psychoanalysts might speculate about repressed anger against father figures. Reading Clinicians don't have the time for metaphysics; they are more task oriented. Roger's teacher was fascinated with his response to the Talking Books. The technique provided Roger with the isolation he needed at that time. It organized the learning task and capitalized upon his auditory strengths. Roger soon exhausted the Talking Book Library. The teacher began to tape, on his own, Cornelius Ryan's books on World War II and began to impose tasks on Roger to help him become more independent. He was rarely asked for one solution to a problem but was always asked to consider a number of alternatives.

At present, Roger's life and learning style have changed. He is reading on grade level; he is not gregarious, but the erstwhile isolate is moving towards people. Dramatics have become a new interest. The structure of the stage is providing a safe setting for new role experimentation. Most recently Roger acted in "Guys and Dolls" playing the role of "Harry the Horse." Perhaps our rigid-inhibited student is preparing to shed the security of that learning style for either the undisciplined or creative style.

Roger gained a sense of self-worth and recognition because a sensitive teacher taught him not only how to read more effectively but also because his learning style was used effectively in modifying his information processing ability.

The third Glasser pathway — *Receiving enjoyment and self-fulfillment* — is a basic tenet of our program. Enjoying school is made possible through a number of learning options. The student has a choice in determining the activity in which he/she will be engaged. The teacher must respect the student's choices and withhold criticism. Learning to read is not restricted to the written word. We live in an era of technology and immediacy. Polaroid cameras, video recorders, cassettes, etc., are as important as the linear word. Children on all levels have been taught to write poetry and teachers have set this poetry to music and have recorded it on cassettes providing the students with a tangible representation of their achievement.

Creativity knows neither right nor wrong. It is the liberation of self and spirit into words, images, music and dance. Poetry and drama have become

part of the everyday learning plan. By freeing the creative spirit in students who have known only failure, the motivation to learn has also been freed. The students are experiencing the excitement of organizing their world through the creation of symbols. Written language is but one way of symbolizing the world. A student in our program who wrote the following poem has learned that language has an important role in life:

LIFE

What is life
Can it be the morning light
Would someone tell me what is life
What is the meaning
The dictionary does not give a definition
True life wonderful life
What does it mean
Is it a new born baby or the poem that I am writing
No one has ever told me
Maybe life can be death
Who knows?
Would someone tell me?

The last of the Glasser pathways to strength — *Becoming Self-Disciplined* — posed many problems for us. Schools have to have a climate of consistent order. Was order, however, inconsistent with humanism? Rules that are externally imposed can turn students off. Our dilemma centered around whether we could develop, in an open education setting, controls from within. A monitoring system was developed to effect subtle structure into our setting and helped students and teachers develop a program of pragmatic humanism.

Many of the basic steps in Reality Therapy are utilized in the monitoring systems. The monitoring system becomes the mirror which continuously reflects to the student their problems and their strengths. Is the student using time effectively? Is the activity helping? If not, what other options are there — let's make a plan. Excuses are never accepted. Consequences are not imposed by the teacher but are mutually developed and since the staff is quixotic, we never give up.

We are committed to this process in reading because students not only have learned to read, they have gained dramatically in self-concept and self-worth. For students the greatest tool in ego expansion is reading. As Richard Wright (1945), said so well:

> "It had been only through books — at best no more than vicarious cultural transfusions — that I had managed to keep myself alive in a negatively vital way. Whenever my environment had failed to support or nourish me I had clutched at books. .... And it was out of these novels, stories, and articles, out of the emotional impact of imaginative constructions of heroic or tragic deeds, that I felt touching my face a tinge of warmth from an unseen light...."

A black student wrote this poem:

HELP

Help me I'm in myself
And I can't get out.
I'm suffering in here
Do you hear my pleas?
If so, please come rescue me...
I'm trying to break through
But no one wants me to
It's dark in here
It's mean in here
my mind! my mind.

We were able to help this student because we have created a school that is not limited to basic skills and information acquisition. We have created a school with three dimensions: intellectual, affective, and creative. Within this foundation students, teachers and administrators have grown.

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The reading program discussed in this article — The Communications Workshop — is designated as a model reading program by the State of New Jersey and the United States Office of Education.

DISCOVERER

First, the good line
finds its own
source— the sun,
moon or other
nourishment

: travels through
the bent finger
—continues its
adumbrations—
locates

itself bending to
rebirth: so
to be eternal,
to become the
great

poem, to lock us
all in its
turnstile of
everlasting
ink . . .

John Cowen

Humanism And Competency

DWAYNE HUEBNER

When we speak of competencies it seems to me we're speaking of two different kinds of things. We're talking about our own felt—if you'll excuse the term—competency. Do I feel competent? Do you feel competent? Do you know other people who feel competent? Over against that is the notion of imposed competencies. Whose competencies are we trying to impose upon whom? This is what we're afraid of in teacher education, aren't we? We are afraid that we're going to impose somebody else's competencies upon someone. And these competencies that I feel and that we impose then determine the superstructures about the ways we think about being human. Somebody else's competencies imposed upon me can lead to somebody else's humane world—which I might see at another level as being inhumane or perhaps alienated—or perhaps just plain job dissatisfaction.

We must return to the source of the recent competency movement which I believe is the concern for accountability. Those dissatisfied with school said, "Hey, I'm being gypped." "Hey look, you're not making available to me and to my kids the necessary competencies." "My view of what it means to be humane is not being honored." "You're trying to put your thing upon us."

The talk of effectiveness hides this imposition and maintains the present distribution of power. The educator, however, is indeed caught. The contradictions between competency and humanism are indeed contradictions in each and every educator. They are the internal contradictions which we should not seek to talk away, but trace back to their source and use to develop better educational resources for the world. The external conditions and contradictions can be used to help this evolution of the educator's world.

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This internal contradiction had taken many forms over the years. Child-centeredness, subject-centeredness. *I* teach children. *I* teach content. Humanism: the student-centered pole. Competence: the subject-centered pole. A school is caught—and school people are caught—in this contradiction. On the one hand there is the legitimate claim that the student is sacred: "Let him be, help him be, don't impose being upon him." And on the other hand, there are the traditions and wealth of skills and competencies which must be preserved and made accessible to every single individual. But having them accessible does not entail imposing them. The developments needed for the present time in the evolution of educational form and curriculum are two: First, the recognition that you or I, the educators, are caught. We are schizoid. There are those of us who indeed must protect the rights and sanctity of the young. This gets in the way of competence sometimes. There must be educators who are indeed child or student advocates, who speak for the child's humaneness and what he perceives himself to be about, and to defend the young against the intrusions of the powerful adult world.

The rest of us or some of us also need to be concerned with the competencies that must be accessible if each youth is to do what he wants to do. Call it subject matter, call it social skills, or what have you. We need to recognize that the pull between competency and humanism is

the pull between making available and accessible the competencies and the skills, the equitable distribution of educational goods and services, and maintaining everyone's own right to choose himself, which means to choose his notion of humaneness, not yours or mine.

This means that we must place where we are in some kind of historical perspective, that we must indeed be able to look at the school scene as conflicting polarity. On the one hand, within the school, we have constantly tried to give form to some notion of justice for the individual. Our grading, grouping, and our judgmental procedures intrude upon this. On the other hand, knowledge has been technological and must continue to be so to be available in educational places. Students must be protected against our impositions, and the wealth of the world must be made available to them. Surrounding these two things, surrounding the concern for justice and the sanctity of the child's own conception of his humaneness, and that technological development of the educational resources, the goods and services, must be the everpresent awareness of where men and women have been and where they are going as world-wide phenomena. The visions of humanity need not be imposed but can be constantly before us as our possibilities. This means that the school and the TV and other mirrors of men and women must stop witnessing to a limited image, but must offer indeed a broader historical view of what men and women have been and where they are going.

The contradiction that you feel between competency and humanism is not to be solved metaphysically—it is to be solved by making sure that the structures of education within which you operate protect the sanctity and constitutional rights of the kid, and at the same time remake the technical world which distributes educational goods and services.

This article is adapted from a presentation delivered at the Teachers College, Columbia University 1974 Conference, "Humanism — Competence: Conflict? Co-Existence? Integration." Published by permission of the author.